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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Technical Meeting on the International
Year and the International Decade
of the World's Indigenous People
Geneva, 20-22 July 1994
Item 8 of the provisional agenda

PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE

Information received from indigenous organizations

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS COMMISSION

[9 May 1994]
[Original: English]

International recommendations

1. That strong support be given to the following recommendations:

   - That the Working Group on Indigenous Populations (WGIP) be a permanent group for the discussion of indigenous issues in the United Nations system;

   - That indigenous issues be a permanent agenda item at the Commission for Human Rights;

   - That a High Commissioner on Indigenous Rights should be appointed;

   - That a permanent forum for Indigenous Peoples be established.

2. That the permanent forum must:

- Have status within the United Nations system;
- Be adequately resourced; and
- Be independent.

3. That the review of developments' framework of WGIP be used as a formal reporting mechanism to the United Nations General Assembly on indigenous issues.

4. That an International Indigenous Peoples' Day be strongly supported and that it be the day of entry of indigenous peoples into the United Nations, i.e. the first day of the Working Group's first session in 1982.

5. That the principles incorporated in the draft declaration of indigenous rights be maintained throughout its transmission through the United Nations system.

6. That access to the Voluntary Fund be broadened.

Decade planning recommendations

7. That the recommendation for a unit to be set up in the Centre for Human Rights to coordinate activities for the Decade be supported.

8. That the proposal for a Goodwill Ambassador(s) be supported whilst acknowledging that the position would require proper resourcing. It was recommended that an ambassador be chosen from the Southern Hemisphere.

9. That an international logo for the Decade be endorsed.

National decade objectives

10. That the ratification of the draft declaration on indigenous rights and its possible movement to a convention be pursued nationally and internationally within the context of a programme of action for the Decade.

11. That indigenous organizations provide reports, independent of Government, on Australia's compliance with international conventions.

12. That a date for an International Indigenous Peoples' Day be considered at the domestic level as an item for action within the Decade.

13. That the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission inquiry into Aboriginal deaths in custody be addressed within the context of the Decade and that legislative avenues be pursued to ensure their implementation.

14. That within the context of the Decade Australia work towards nominating an indigenous woman to sit on the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

15. That a national committee be convened to coordinate the domestic activities for the Decade. That the national committee established for the International Year of the World's Indigenous People be used as a model for the Decade committee and that some members of that committee be considered as inaugural members of the Decade body. Membership of the committee should change periodically over the course of the Decade and might include special representatives appropriate to any annual themes that may be decided upon.

16. That annual themes for consideration be:

- Family
- Children
- Indigenous women
- Indigenous men
- Indigenous youth
- Aged
- Heritage and culture
- Land rights
- Royal Commission inquiry into Aboriginal deaths in custody

INDIGENOUS INITIATIVE FOR PEACE

[16 May 1994]
[Original: English and Spanish]

The following general goals are proposed for the Decade:

1. Reaffirm and develop, at national and international levels, the values, institutions, cultural identity and the recognition of the inalienable individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples, including their human rights. To advance in the full realization of those rights, in particular the rights to self-determination, to their ancestral lands and resources, and to an ecologically sustainable development in accordance with the interests and priorities of indigenous peoples;

2. Promote and facilitate the implementation of the political will expressed by Governments in the Final Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights (para. 20) and its Programme of Action (para. B-2-31), in order to reach the full and free participation of indigenous peoples in all aspects of their respective societies, particularly in relation to those issues which affect them;

3. Develop effective measures to intensify the struggle against the various manifestations of racism, discrimination and intolerance which increasingly affect indigenous peoples;

4. Carry out educational campaigns aimed at national and international public opinion, governmental authorities, and the non-indigenous sectors in each society, regarding the political, cultural, economic and social dimensions of indigenous struggles for dignity, their identify and their inalienable rights;

5. Facilitate the establishment and development of adequate communication and policy coordination channels and policy concentration among indigenous peoples, in order to promote greater awareness of their common problems and the launching of joint actions at the national and international levels;

6. Ensure the full participation of indigenous peoples and their representatives in the decision-making process concerning issues which directly affect them at the local, regional, national and international levels;

7. Ensure the dignified access of indigenous peoples to adequate resources for their participation in the activities of the Decade.

With the purpose of fulfilling the aforementioned general goals, concrete actions aimed at achieving the following special objectives should be planned and carried out during the Decade:

1. Ensure the broadest dissemination possible within each Member State, and internationally, of the goals and objectives of the Decade, as well as the different activities which are part of the detailed plan of action to be established for the Decade;

2. Encourage all Member States in which there are indigenous peoples to support and facilitate the full participation of indigenous institutions, organizations and individuals in all national and international activities which will be organized within the framework of the Decade;

3. Conclude, by 1997, the process of adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the United Nations General Assembly;

4. Design and implement, by the beginning of 1995, a procedure to ensure the effective participation of indigenous peoples in the deliberations and decision-making process that will take place in relation to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Commission on Human Rights, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly;

5. Design and implement, by the beginning of 1997, a procedure to assure that indigenous peoples will also have an effective participation in the deliberations and decision-making process that will take place in relation to issues which concern them in other United Nations bodies;

6. Achieve, through permanent national and international educational campaigns, the greatest possible awareness of: (1) the ethical, familial, cultural, economic, environmental and social values upon which indigenous societies are founded; (2) the nature and content of their institutions and the principles on which they are based; (3) the exceptional contribution of indigenous peoples to the national culture of the different countries in which they live as well as to the cultural heritage of humanity in general; and (4) the content of their inalienable rights, including their individual and collective human rights.

7. Publicize as much as possible, with the active participation of the Department of Public Information of the United Nations, the magnitude of the problems currently confronted by indigenous peoples, through seminars, symposia and specialized international conferences, and through Special Studies on relevant aspects of the present situation of indigenous peoples;

8. Plan for the inclusion of programmes relevant to the goals and objectives of the Decade within the activities of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and the Decade for Human Rights Education;

9. Establish the necessary coordination to include programmes relevant to the goals and objectives of the Decade within the activities of other intergovernmental organizations;

10. Promote, in each Member State in which indigenous peoples live, the undertaking, as soon as possible, of an in-depth study aimed at the timely implementation of a National Plan of Action with the purpose of establishing a new relationship between Governments and indigenous peoples, which will: (1) secure the recognition of indigenous identities and the respect due them and their institutions, customs and political, legal, economic, social, religious and cultural practices in general; (2) recognize and promote the multilingual, pluriethnic and multicultural character of that society; and (3) ensure equal opportunities for the full and free participation of indigenous peoples in all aspects of the society in which they live;

11. Facilitate the development, in each Member State in which indigenous peoples live, of suitable mechanisms of promotion, control and peaceful resolution of conflicts, including those related to treaties, in order to achieve the realization, observance and protection of the inalienable individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples;

12. Encourage the revision and updating of legal frameworks in order to eradicate those policies and practices which foster or justify discriminatory actions against indigenous peoples;

13. Promote, in all States in which indigenous peoples live, legal frameworks, policies and practices recognizing the identify and rights of indigenous peoples and promoting full intercultural respect;

14. Promote the full implementation of the international instruments and standards, including human rights standards, which recognize the individual and collective rights of peoples, including indigenous peoples;

15. Implement projects aimed at recovering the indigenous identity of the millions of people who have renounced that identity due to the social pressures and violence they have suffered for centuries;

16. Promote, in the countries in which indigenous peoples live, the development and implementation of national policies and programmes for health care, education, employment, sustainable economic development and equitable distribution of resources, to guarantee adequate levels of development and quality of life for indigenous peoples, and to eradicate the present disparities between the indigenous and non-indigenous segments of society;

17. Encourage in those countries the implementation of policies and concrete projects aimed at facilitating and protecting the organizational and communal development activities of indigenous peoples and supporting an active indigenous participation in the life of the society;

18. Design and implement concrete projects which facilitate greater access of indigenous institutions and organizations to the national and international mass media, and the creation of their own communications media;

19. Promote, in all countries in which indigenous peoples live, the establishment of one day each calendar year, to be recognized as a Day of Recognition of Indigenous Dignity, as an official day of public awareness, which should be appropriately observed;

20. Establish a date for the appropriate observance by the United Nations and Member States of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples;

21. Promote the establishment in all Member States, of a National Committee for the Decade with ample authority for establishing a National Plan of Action, coordinating, implementing and periodically evaluating all the activities included in said Plan. In the case of countries in which indigenous peoples live, the Committee will be composed of an equal number of indigenous and non-indigenous members;

22. Achieve the appointment of Ms. Rigoberta Menchú Tum as United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the International Decade of The World's Indigenous Peoples, who will submit an annual report to the General Assembly on the progress of the Decade;

23. Encourage Member States to appoint indigenous persons as senior diplomats, to nominate them as candidates for election to international human rights bodies and to support their appointment as Professional officials within the United Nations system;

24. Establish, by the first quarter of 1995, appropriate permanent mechanisms which will enable the Coordinator for the Decade to ensure coordination with the specialized agencies of the United Nations, with other bodies of the system, and with non-governmental organizations, in order to plan, implement and evaluate the different activities of the Decade;

25. Establish by the first quarter of 1995, the appropriate permanent mechanisms to ensure coordination between the indigenous organizations and institutions within the different Member States, the Coordinator for the Decade and all United Nations bodies and specialized agencies;

26. Establish, by the first quarter of 1995, the Voluntary Fund for the Decade, to be formally instituted by the United Nations Secretary-General;

27. Secure the direct participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making concerning the use of Fund resources for Decade activities and staff hiring, with indigenous representatives serving as full members of the Board of Trustees which should be established for the administration of the Fund;

28. Organize and convene, at regular intervals (preferably every two years), pledging conferences of Member States for contributions to the Fund, to be held in New York during the United Nations General Assembly sessions in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001 and 2003;

29. Encourage Member States and other potential donors to contribute generously to the Fund, preferably without earmarking those contributions for specific projects;.

30. Encourage further, Member States to instruct their representatives in the United Nations administrative and budgetary bodies to take the necessary initiatives to ensure that sufficient funds are allocated in the regular budgets of the United Nations and the specialized agencies to carry out the Plan of Action of the Decade;

31. Ensure that the necessary resources for properly fulfilling their respective mandates are provided to all present and future Special Rapporteurs on indigenous issues;

32. Design and establish, by the second quarter of 1995, an appropriate mechanism within the Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, for estimating thoroughly and well in advance the costs of implementing every activity included in the Decade's detailed Plan of Action;

33. Design and implement, by 1 July 1996, within the Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, a suitable database which allows the Centre to quickly and efficiently respond to the needs of the Decade;

34. Encourage Member States to support, in the appropriate bodies of the United Nations, the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples;

35. Carry out a feasibility study on the creation, within the United Nations system, of a conflict resolution (or professional arbitration) body which would address the conflicts, including those relating to treaties, between Governments and indigenous peoples, once the procedures allowed for in national legislation in each case have been exhausted;

36. Promote, within the United Nations system, the establishment of an international mechanism to monitor the strict observance of international instruments and standards on the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of the environment; which will recommend measures to protect and restore the natural ecological systems of the territories traditionally inhabited by indigenous peoples affected by violations of those instruments and standards;

37. Support the continuity of the Sub-Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations with its current mandate and status as a permanent body; at present the only forum within the United Nations system to which indigenous individuals, peoples and their organizations have unrestricted access;

38. Design and establish the mechanisms for periodic evaluation of the actual results of the activities of the Decade, including the identification of the nature and dimensions of the difficulties encountered, and the possible solutions to those difficulties;

39. Advance the process of drafting a Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to be submitted to a conference of government leaders to be convened for this purpose by the end of the Decade;

40. Design, by the end of 2002, the basic elements and essential goals for a "Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples", to be proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly during its fifty-eighth session (2003), and which would begin on 10 December 2004.

The organization also proposed a detailed year-by-year timetable and programme of activities for the Decade, grouped around "central themes". This document is available for consultation with the secretariat.

SAAMI COUNCIL

[13 March 1994]
[Original: English]

1. Saami Council, at its plenary session in Kiruna, Sweden, 6-7 March 1994, unanimously pledged to participate as much as possible, economic and human resources permitting, in seeking positive achievements throughout the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

2. Opinions and recommendations from consultations between Saami Council member organizations in Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway were tabled at the above-mentioned session. Saami Council believes that the matters listed below ought to be considered as tasks during the decade:

(a) Arctic Indigenous Leaders Summit, fall 1995;

(b) Saami Convention, a draft of which has been distributed by the Saami Council judicial work group. The draft will be sent to the Nordic Governments in 1995. Consultations with officials indicate a positive stance by Governments. Governmental studies will probably be published in 1996;

(c) Follow-up on ILO Convention No. 169. A seminar is being planned to take place in 1996;

(d) San People (Bushmen) of southern Africa. Saami Council has been sponsored by the Nordic Governments to take part in major conferences in Botswana (1992) and Namibia (1993). An African programme should be discussed under the auspices of the United Nations;

(e) Traditional indigenous knowledge of the environment. Saami Council is taking part in the Arctic Environment Protection Strategy (the so-called Finnish Initiative). Saami Council, together with the Inuit Circumpolar Conference and the Association of Small Northern Peoples of Russia, has embarked on research in this regard and will particularly emphasize this work during the Decade. A planning seminar takes place in Iceland in September 1994;

(f) Nordic Forum (women's conference) 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, in 1995. The Saami work group is expected to present a programme on Arctic women's issues during the Decade;

(g) World Wilderness Congress. Saami Council was a co-organiser and implementer of the last WWC in October 1993 in Tromsoe, Norway. In 1995 Saami Council will compile assessments on further engagements that would be part of the Decade programme;

(h) Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Agenda 21 is dealt with on a national level, i.e. Saami parliaments take the lead and the Saami Council is an observer;

(i) Arts from the Arctic exhibition will commence the Decade by displays in Saami areas in 1995;

(j) Realization of the programme of aid to the Russian Saami made by the Saami Council (e.g. educational conference);

(k) Realization of the Saami Children Rights Programme during the Decade.

3. It is vitally important to the Saami Council to cooperate on indigenous issues and rights on an international level through the United Nations and through other organizations and NGOs.

4. The permanent forum for indigenous people should be established on the highest possible level in the United Nations system and address all indigenous concerns.

WORLD COUNCIL OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

[13 May 1994]
[Original: English]

Resolution on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples

The General Assembly of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples cautiously acknowledges the United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, as proposed in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (A/CONF.157/23). We hope that its potential will be realized, thereby improving upon and benefiting the situation of indigenous peoples worldwide and that it will further mutual understanding and respect between ourselves, nation-States and intergovernmental organizations.

Therefore:

Noting that we would prefer that the title be the United Nations International Decade of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

Considering the necessity and vital importance of the full and informed consent, participation, collaboration and input of indigenous peoples in all matters of concern to us, in the spirit of the United Nations draft declaration of the rights of indigenous peoples, the report of the United Nations conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (A/CONF.151/26) and International Labour Organisation Convention No. 169 and those documents emanating from the Kari-oca Conference;

Also considering the contribution of the International Year of the World's Indigenous People in raising awareness about indigenous issues and concerns and the need to build on and learn from the lessons of the International Year;

Sadly noting the shortcomings of the International Year, including: the lack of indigenous participation throughout the United Nations system; the lack of political will and financial support by the international community, particularly within the United Nations system and its Member States, to achieve the promise of the United Nations International Year and the evidence of inadequate planning, lack of coordination and poor communications channels;

Hope that these shortcomings will not reoccur during any phase of the Decade, and rest assured that they can be addressed to ensure a mutually rewarding undertaking.

Furthermore:

Recognizing the importance of the United Nations draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, ILO Convention No. 169 and the report of UNCED, particularly the Convention on Bio-Diversity and chapter 26 of Agenda 21 (A/CONF.151/26) and those results emanating from the Kari-oca Conference;

Further recognizing the necessity of establishing a permanent United Nations forum for indigenous peoples at the highest level, as envisaged by the United Nations Draft Declaration, to facilitate the full and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples within the United Nations system, other international bodies and institutions and the activities of the Decade;

Noting that the success of the Decade, if it is to be more than simply the United Nations Decade, is dependent upon the establishment of a comprehensive and effective working partnership between indigenous peoples and the United Nations system in all aspects of planning, coordination and implementation, including the provision of adequate financial assistance in furtherance of these activities;

We, the General Assembly of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples,

Acknowledge the proclamation of the Decade, welcome the designation of 1994 as a year of planning and subscribe to the stated goal of strengthening international cooperation as an aid to alleviating the problems encountered by indigenous peoples in areas such as human rights, environment, development, education, health, etc., provided that the rights, wishes and participation of indigenous peoples are recognized and incorporated therein;

Strongly urge that the following be designated as specific objectives for the Decade:

1. The prompt and careful consideration, approval and ratification of the United Nations draft declaration of the rights of indigenous peoples in the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly, and that Member States of the United Nations implement this instrument; additionally, the promotion and implementation of chapter 26 of Agenda 21. These activities require the full participation of indigenous peoples in all the attendant intergovernmental deliberations and other activities related to these instruments;

2. The creation of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations system, at the highest level, specifically the designation of a United Nations High Commissioner for Indigenous Peoples, that has the direct and substantial input of, participation in, and collaboration with indigenous peoples;

3. That steps be taken to enhance the participation and representation of indigenous peoples in international bodies and institutions, particularly development-related and financial institutions, so that these entities may be more responsive and sensitive to our needs and aspirations, and that our views may be recognized and incorporated into all matters of concern to us.

To achieve these objectives and the overall success of the Decade, we resolve the following:

Recognizing the contributions of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the Sub-Commission, the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, development and other specialized agencies within the United Nations system and elsewhere and the constraints within which these entities operate;

We urge, as a matter of priority, that an effective mechanism be established to incorporate indigenous peoples into any decision-making processes and to coordinate therewith the activities of the Decade. To be truly effective this mechanism needs to substantially incorporate the input, concerns and wishes of indigenous peoples, as they relate to all levels of interaction, planning and implementation;

Therefore, we request that, as part of the year of planning, the United Nations, including the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, in collaboration with indigenous peoples, sponsor conferences and workshops, in each region where indigenous peoples are present, to receive the direct input of indigenous peoples as to their goals, interests and concerns in the planning and implementation of the Decade.

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